

Miscellaneous.: QUACKERY IN SCHOOL BOOKS.

Monitor

New York *Observer and Chronicle* (1833-1912); Mar 26, 1842; 20, 13; American Periodicals

pg. 52

nishes *baleful*. But this is not true; *baleful* properly signifies *pernicious*; *mournful* does not.

Rabid and *raging* are given as synonymous; but although we hear of a *raging tempest*, who ever heard of a *rabid tempest*?

Chase and *drive* are given as synonymous; but does a farmer *chase* his team? Does a coachman *chase* his horses? Does a carpenter *chase* nails?

Who, without the book before him, could believe that any man should give *spontaneous* and *voluntary* as synonymous? One moment's reflection would suggest to any man of ordinary mind, that *voluntary* always implies the *will* of an intelligent agent, and that spontaneous growth and spontaneous combustion have no reference to the *will* of any being.

I am astonished at the success of incompetent compilers of books and active booksellers in urging into schools these and many other books which are worse than useless.

Truth is the object of instruction; and it is better to teach nothing than to teach what is not true. I am told that these books in the Eastern States have been utterly rejected.

MONITOR.

Miscellaneous.

For the New-York Observer.

QUACKERY IN SCHOOL BOOKS.

We frequently see statistics of schools, their number, and the amount of money expended in supporting them. But how little attention is

given to the character of the books used in the common schools. From observations made during several years past, I am convinced that

incompetent men who make books for schools, and

illiterate men who urge them into use, are multi-

plying the errors and imperfections of class

books, particularly of those which are intended

for instruction in our native language. Some of

the errors are copied from English books; others

originate with compilers in this country.

Among the impositions practised on our citi-

zens is the publication of an *Inductive Grammar*,

now called *Productive*. But there is not and can

not be any such thing. There is no induction in

Grammar, none in Geography. All grammar and

all geography rest on *facts*, without reasoning

from premises.

But the most extraordinary examples of incor-

rect books off-red for the use of schools, are the

defining spelling books, intended to teach signi-

fications by synonyms, and to teach spelling and

definition at the same time. The plan of these

books is this. Two or three words are printed

on the same line, and these words are to be used

to define each other; as the pupil is directed to

read the line from the left to the right, or from

the right to the left. Thus we may read "adder

is a serpent, or serpent is an adder;" "artifice,

stratagem, deception, or deception, stratagem,

artifico." In these examples we are to admit the

words to have the same meaning. But how ob-

viously false does the first definition become by

inverting the order of words. An adder is a

serpent indeed; every adder is a serpent; but

every serpent is not an adder. An adder is one

species, and a serpent is every species.

As to the other definition, it is not true; decep-

tion is not artifice or stratagem; but may be the

effect of either.

In one of these books *guile* and *craft* are given

as synonymous. If this was true, the declaration

of Demetrius, in Acts xix., might have been in

these words: "By this *guile* we have our

wealth."

The first words in these defining tables, in San-

ders' Spelling Book, are *baleful*, *mournful*; that

is, *baleful* signifies *mournful*, and *mournful* sig-